

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 EURE-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-02 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-15 SAJ-01

ACDA-10 TRSE-00 EB-07 COME-00 INT-05 IO-11 OFA-01

DLOS-04 SAL-01 OMB-01 /110 W
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P R 181455Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY REYKJAVIK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6046

INFO COMICEDEFOR

CINCLANT

CNO WASHDC

SECDEF WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY HELSINKI

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OSLO

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

USMISSION NATO PRIORITY

UNCLAS REYKJAVIK 0227

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR EFIS MARR IC NATO US

SUBJECT: FONMIN ENDORSES NATO; SEPARATES DEFENSE AND FISHERIES ISSUES

1. IN TV DEBATE NIGHT OF FEBRUARY 17, FONMIN EINAR AGUSTSSON SUPPORTED ICELAND'S CONTINUED NATO MEMBERSHIP AND REJECTED PROPOSALS THAT GOI DEMAND SUPPORT FROM NATO AND IDF IN CURRENT FISHERIES DISPUTE.

2. FONMIN APPEARED ON WEEKLY FOREIGN AFFAIRS PROGRAM TOGETHER WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF OTHER POLITICAL PARTIES, INCLUDING OUTSPOKENLY VEHEMENT CRITIC OF NATO AND IDF FROM PEOPLES ALLIANCE. AT OUTSET OF DISCUSSION, AGUSTSSON EXPLAINED IMPORTANCE OF NATO IN GENERAL
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TERMS, NOTING SECURITY IT AFFORDS MEMBERS AND FACT THAT MILITARY

STRENGTH OF "OUTSIDE" POWERS MAKES ALLIANCE AS NECESSARY TODAY AS WHEN IT WAS FOUNDED. ON OTHER HAND, HE SAID, ICELAND SHOULD REVIEW MEMBERSHIP IF IT EVER APPEARED IN COUNTRY'S INTEREST TO DO SO.

3. DEBATE TURNED TO FISHERIES DISPUTE, AND FONMIN WAS ASKED WHETHER IN VIEW OF HITHERTO "ONE-SIDED" ICELAND-NATO RELATIONSHIP IT WAS NOT TIME FOR GOI TO SEEK PROTECTION FROM ALLIANCE. AGUSTSSON SAID DEFENSE AND FISHERIES MATTERS WERE SEPARATE AND ICELAND SHOULD NOT TRADE ON ITS DEFENSE RELATIONSHIP WITH NATO TO MAKE DEMANDS ON ALLIANCE IN FISHERIES DISPUTE. HE SAID ICELAND SHOULD USE NATO AS FORUM TO MAKE ITS CASE KNOWN, ADDING THAT THIS POLICY HAD ALREADY PRODUCED RESULTS, E.G., EXPRESSION OF SUPPORT FROM NORWAY. HE SAID THAT ICELAND GREATLY APPRECIATES SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM NATO. AT ANOTHER POINT, FONMIN SAID HE HOPED NATO WOULD DO SOMETHING FOR ICELAND BECAUSE OF LATTER'S IMPORTANCE TO ALLIANCE DEFENSE, BUT ADDED THAT, IN ANY CASE, ICELAND INTENDED TO STAY IN NATO.

4. AGUSTSSON WAS ASKED WHETHER US-MANNED ICELAND DEFENSE FORCE SHOULDN'T JUSTIFY ITS PRESENCE BY PROTECTING ICELAND AGAINST UK, ESPECIALLY IN CASE OF INCIDENTS SUCH AS OCCURRED IN DECEMBER WHEN BRITISH VESSELS "ENCROACHED" ON ICELAND'S FOUR-MILE TERRITORIAL LIMIT. AGUSTSSON OUTLINED HIS OWN ATTITUDE TOWARD IDF (HE PERSONALLY AND PREVIOUS LEFTIST GOVERNMENT HAD HOPED IDF WOULD GO, BUT ELECTION AND CHANGED CIRCUMSTANCES INTERVENED) AND THEN SAID HE WOULD NOT WANT US "POLICEMEN" DEFENDING ICELAND'S WATERS. HE ADDED THAT IDF IS HERE BECAUSE IT IS IN ICELAND'S INTEREST, NOT SOLELY THAT OF US. IT WOULD THEREFORE BE WRONG TO TAKE RASH ACTION CONCERNING DEFENSE TIES WITH US.

5. IN CONCLUDING REMARKS, AGUSTSSON SAID HE RESERVED RIGHT TO CHANGE OPINION ON ANY POSITION HE HAD TAKEN, IF CIRCUMSTANCES WARRANT.

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